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COORDINATION OF POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME: MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO ALL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Gerhard Walter Henze (Germany)

1. The Economic and Social Council takes note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on the coordination of United Nations system activities for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system (E/1997/66).

2. States unanimously agreed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in 1995, that it is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women. In order to ensure effective implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, 1/ the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective.

1/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1997 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. 1, resolution 1, annex II.

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3. In recognition of the fact that a gender perspective has not yet been fully integrated into the mainstream of United Nations activities, the Council wishes to promote a coordinated and coherent policy of gender mainstreaming by further clarifying the concept of mainstreaming and central principles associated with it as well as by addressing specific recommendations to all actors within the United Nations system.

I. CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

A. Definition of the concept of gender mainstreaming

4. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

B. Principles for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the United Nations system

5. Issues across all areas of United Nations activities should be defined in such a manner that gender differences can be diagnosed, i.e. an assumption of gender-neutrality should not be made.

6. Responsibility for translating gender mainstreaming into practice is system-wide and rests at the highest levels. Accountability for outcomes needs to be monitored constantly.

7. Gender mainstreaming also requires that all efforts be made to broaden women's participation at all levels of decision-making.

8. Gender mainstreaming must be institutionalized through concrete steps, mechanisms and processes in all parts of the United Nations system.

9. Gender mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes, and/or positive legislation, nor does it substitute gender units or focal points.

10. Clear political will and the allocation of adequate and, if need be, additional human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming from all available funding sources are important for successful translation of the concept into practice.

II. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

11. The Economic and Social Council highlights the importance of undertaking immediate and concrete steps to mainstream a gender perspective, including the implementation as a matter of urgency of the recommendations contained in this document, and at the latest by the time of the five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2000.

A. The intergovernmental process of the United Nations

12. The Economic and Social Council encourages the General Assembly to direct all of its committees and bodies and draw the attention of other bodies of the United Nations system to the need to mainstream a gender perspective systematically into all areas of their work, in particular in areas such as macroeconomic questions, operational activities for development, poverty eradication, human rights, humanitarian assistance, budgeting, disarmament, peace and security, and legal and political matters, taking full advantage of the outcome of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women.

13. All bodies that deal with programme and budgetary matters, including the Committee for Programme and Coordination, should ensure in their work that all programmes visibly mainstream a gender perspective.

14. Other intergovernmental bodies with similar responsibilities in the United Nations system, for instance, the governing bodies of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the specialized agencies, are encouraged to monitor the way in which the concerned agencies, funds and programmes implement gender mainstreaming in their respective medium-term plans and programme budgets, including at the field level.

15. The Council will take steps to strengthen its harmonization and coordination of the work programmes of the functional commissions, as well as the interaction between the Council, the functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies on ways to accelerate gender mainstreaming, and, to this end, entrusts its bureau with establishing or strengthening a dialogue with the chairpersons and bureaux of those bodies as well as between them, with the active support of the chairperson and bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women.

16. The Council calls upon all of its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies to mainstream a gender perspective in their work, and in this regard:

(a) To adopt, as a first step, an explicit decision on mainstreaming a gender perspective in their work;

(b) To make maximum use of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on the 12 critical areas of concern when monitoring implementation of global conferences with regard to related topics, at the national and international level;

(c) To take into account the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights in the area of enjoyment of human rights by women.

17. The Commission on the Status of Women is urged:

(a) To provide suggestions to other functional commissions and the Council on gender mainstreaming;

(b) To use the work of other functional commissions, in view of the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action - for example, in 1998, that of the Commission on Human Rights and, in 1999, that of the Commission on Population and Development, in relation to priority themes.

18. Regional commissions are requested to assume a catalytic role in exchanging experiences and best practices as well as promoting cooperation on gender mainstreaming on a regional level.

19. The Secretariat is requested to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation and to ensure that the intergovernmental machinery is made aware of the decisions and recommendations of other relevant bodies in relation to gender mainstreaming.

20. Under an item entitled "Integrated follow-up of major United Nations conferences", the Council will monitor annually the way in which its functional commissions and subsidiary bodies mainstream a gender perspective on the basis of the report on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

B. Institutional requirements for gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes

21. The Council welcomes the Secretary-General's commitment to mainstreaming a gender perspective and encourages him to demand accountability from senior

managers to realize gender mainstreaming and, in this regard, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women is encouraged to continue to fulfil her important role.

22. In the ongoing reform process within the United Nations system, inter alia, in the work of the executive committees, the systemic integration of a gender perspective should be ensured.

23. The Council encourages the efforts of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to develop a mission statement on gender mainstreaming and trusts that such a statement will send a clear and concrete message to the system and will be applicable system-wide.

24. The heads of the specialized agencies are encouraged to establish accountability of senior managers for gender mainstreaming.

25. All entities of the United Nations system should, making full use of the expertise and support of gender units or focal points - the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality - institutionalize mainstreaming of a gender perspective at all levels through specific steps including:

(a) The adoption of gender mainstreaming policies and the formulation of specific mainstreaming strategies for sectoral areas;

(b) The use of institutional directives rather than discretionary guidelines for gender mainstreaming;

(c) The improvement of tools for gender mainstreaming such as gender analysis, the use of data disaggregated by sex and age and sector-specific gender surveys, as well as gender-sensitive studies, guidelines and checklists for programming;

(d) The establishment of instruments and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, such as gender-impact analysis methodologies;

(e) The creation of accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.

26. United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies should ensure that, on the basis of gender analysis, gender concerns are addressed in all planning activities, when setting priorities, allocating resources, and identifying actions and activities. They should also be requested to include

an assessment of the steps taken to translate gender mainstreaming into country programmes and projects in their reports to the Council at its operational activities segment.

27. All entities of the United Nations system should institute mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in their planning and programming, for example, through participation of gender specialists in these processes. Administrative procedures should be adapted to include mechanisms of accountability, ensuring that a gender analysis has been conducted and its results reflected in the respective activity.

28. The Council will assess the extent to which a gender perspective is being applied through institutional directives for planning and programming, in preparation of the comprehensive review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001.

29. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and UNIFEM, in their advocacy and advisory role, should better coordinate their support and catalytic activities for gender mainstreaming and should identify and develop joint activities and work plans in appropriate areas. The annual reports of INSTRAW and UNIFEM should be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women for information.

C. The role of gender units and focal points in gender mainstreaming

30. The location, seniority level, resources and participation of gender units/focal points in all policy-making and programming processes and support by the most senior levels of management and decision-making are also crucial in translating the gender mainstreaming mandate into practical reality. The role of such gender specialists in all areas, including the economic and social field, human rights and the political, humanitarian, peace and security areas, should be strengthened.

31. The responsibilities of gender units and focal points should include:

(a) Support for the development of gender-sensitive policies and programme strategies;

(b) Advice and support of staff in applying a gender perspective, in particular in the follow-up to United Nations conferences;

(c) Development of tools and methodologies for gender mainstreaming;

(d) Collection and dissemination of information and best practices;

(e) Assistance in monitoring and evaluating progress in gender mainstreaming in policy, programme and budgetary terms.

32. At the field level, United Nations gender units and focal points should:

(a) Provide guidance to the entities of the United Nations system on gender mainstreaming in the integrated conference follow-up across different sectoral areas;

(b) In this regard, network with national machinery for the advancement of women and all non-governmental organizations, in particular women's non-governmental organizations.

D. Capacity-building for gender mainstreaming

33. To enhance system-wide gender sensitivity and gender expertise through training as a priority for gender mainstreaming, all entities of the United Nations system should:

(a) Integrate a gender perspective into all training programmes;

(b) Provide continuous gender training for all staff, including those at the highest levels;

(c) Provide special training for gender experts to enhance their skills;

(d) Ensure that specialized gender expertise is available to them;

(e) Coordinate their training efforts through a system-wide evaluation of the impact of gender-training.

34. The relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system should consider making arrangements and, if necessary, drawing up additional protocols to existing memoranda of understanding in order to mainstream a gender perspective in inter-agency partnerships and in cooperation agreements with intergovernmental organizations.

35. To strengthen capacities for the collection, evaluation and exchange of gender-related information, a coordinated, system-wide effort under the leadership of the main coordinators for specific areas is needed for the development and systematic usage of, inter alia:

(a) Gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators;

(b) Proposals for treaty bodies and States on how to use statistics, including gender-disaggregated data, in reporting on and monitoring all relevant treaties in order to integrate a gender perspective;

(c) Non-numerical indicators to monitor gender mainstreaming;

(d) Electronic networks for information exchange on gender mainstreaming, such as WomenWatch;

(e) Gender-sensitive public information activities and materials in all thematic areas.

36. Gender balance is another central goal. It is recommended that the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women be regularly provided with statistics on the number and percentage of women at all levels throughout the whole United Nations system. The Council reaffirms the goal of a 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 within the United Nations system, especially at the D-1 level and above, with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in conformity with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, also taking into account the lack of representation or the under-representation of certain countries. The ACC Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions and the International Civil Service Commission should monitor progress in staffing policies aimed at achieving gender balance.

37. Capacity-building also requires the collection and sharing of best practices and lessons learned within the United Nations system and at the national level, including successful national initiatives:

(a) The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is encouraged to develop a standardized format for documenting and assessing gender mainstreaming experiences in all areas of work, such as social and economic development, macroeconomic questions, operational activities for development, poverty eradication, human rights, humanitarian assistance, budgeting, disarmament, peace and security, and legal and political matters, including in training and capacity-building;

(b) The practice of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in cooperating and collaborating with other treaty-monitoring bodies, should serve as a good example of the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system;

(c) At the field level, United Nations operational entities should, with support from gender experts and coordinated by inter-agency committees, develop and share memoranda of understanding on gender equality goals in programme development and project implementation.

38. The Division for the Advancement of Women, acting as the secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women, should play an especially

active role in generating new ideas, proposing practical suggestions and promoting constructive implementation of gender mainstreaming.

39. Capacity building further requires recognizing the importance of working with national commissions, national institutions for the advancement of women and non-governmental organizations, in particular women's non-governmental organizations, and developing partnerships with them.

40. Accountability structures for gender mainstreaming need to be introduced and/or strengthened through institutional mechanisms and management culture. In this regard, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality is encouraged:

(a) To prepare a catalogue of accountability measures, including performance indicators, to monitor and evaluate progress in gender mainstreaming on both the programmatic and resource side;

(b) To establish a baseline on gender mainstreaming performance by identifying a number of core indicators to be used in all departments and entities;

(c) To report regularly thereon, including to the Commission on the Status of Women.

E. Gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up to global United Nations conferences

41. In order to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up, review and appraisal of global United Nations conferences, the Council urges all entities of the United Nations system to:

(a) Apply a gender perspective to all conference follow-up and, where appropriate, adjust their implementation activities accordingly, including through targeted, women-specific projects;

(b) To utilize gender analysis effectively to identify differential impacts of implementation on women and men and to guide implementation towards gender equality.

42. The resident coordinator should play a primary role in developing a coherent approach to gender mainstreaming in United Nations activities on conference follow-up at the field level, inter alia, through country strategy notes where these exist. Close cooperation between the resident coordinator, UNIFEM regional programme advisers, UNDP gender focal points and other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes should be ensured.

43. All United Nations gender experts/focal points at the field level, including the UNIFEM regional programme advisers, should:

(a) Establish a policy dialogue within sectoral areas to identify areas of commonality and complementarity of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action with the results of other United Nations conferences;

(b) Facilitate linkages between national machineries for the advancement of women and all non-governmental organizations, in particular women's non-governmental organizations, and the institutions and processes engaged in implementation of United Nations conferences.

44. Enhanced interaction among the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW, UNIFEM and national machineries for the advancement of women, such as national commissions, national institutions and all non-governmental organizations, in particular women's non-governmental organizations and relevant research institutes, should be pursued.